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# The Brown Water Navy: The River and Coastal War in Indo-China and Vietnam, 1948-1972

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political street, Darlan gained for the navy its largest budget to date from the detested Popular Front government, but he did little to tamp down the swelling sentiment within the navy against the Third Republic. In fact, Hood states that Darlan felt that the government was incapable of coping with the wartime crisis in 1939 and that a war cabinet with full powers should replace the parliament. With his anglophobia as a driving force, Darlan refused to throw in with the British at sea. Rather, when Marshal Petain formed the Vichy regime in 1940, Darlan was at his side as Minister of Marine. After the armistice, he told his admirals that the armistice benefited Frenchmen everywhere and assured them that "It is for us Frenchmen to profit from their [Germany's] hopes and, if we play the game with enough finesse, it is possible that we will come out of this adventure in good shape."

Darlan, of course, did not come out of the adventure in good shape, for he was assassinated in North Africa in 1942. Nor did his coterie of friends emerge from Vichy with laurels. The Vichy government, known as the "Society for the Protection of the Admirals," was indeed heavily laced with Darlan's followers. Ten admirals served at the cabinet or subcabinet level and later stood before the *Haute Cour de Justice* to receive their punishments as Nazi collaborators. Dreams, fostered by sincere convictions and bolstered by background, education, isolation, anglophobia and royalist hopes, turned into tragedy in the reality of the times. It is a sad and

instructive tale.

Hood has done a commendable job in presenting this analysis. His thorough research, including his interviews with former naval officers and their families, makes this a book of value to historians and sociologists who may wish to delve further into this unfortunate chapter in the history of the French Navy.

EDWARD F. WELCH, JR.  
Rear Admiral, US Navy (Ret.)

Croizat, Victor. *The Brown Water Navy: The River and Coastal War in Indo-China and Vietnam, 1948-1972*. New York: Sterling Publishing, 1985. 160pp. \$17.95

The subtitle of Colonel Croizat's book is *The River and Coastal War in Indo-China and Vietnam, 1948-1972*. It is unfortunate that relatively little space in the book is devoted to telling the story of that war, and so much is taken up with dry, organizational matter that, quite frankly, reads as if it were lifted from poorly written command histories.

If anyone is equipped to tell the story of the Brown Water Navy in Southeast Asia, Colonel Croizat should be the one. He had a number of interesting assignments there during the period 1954-68. He participated in the evacuation of Haiphong after the French defeat at Dien Bien Phu. He served with the Franco-American Military Training Mission (TRIM), with the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization in Bangkok, with the Fleet Marine Force Riverine Warfare Study (South

Vietnam), and finally with the Rand office in Saigon.

And the Brown Water Navy's story is worth telling. It is a story filled with drama, courage, self-sacrifice and, ultimately, tragic failure as the US Navy, unwittingly, contributed mightily in a process that created in Communist Vietnam one of the strongest military powers in the world.

One of the duties of a writer of history is to separate wheat from chaff. Colonel Croizat seems to have done this but, inexplicably, he has given us mostly the latter. A good editor, perhaps, could have saved him, but his book shows little evidence of having been edited at all.

Buy it for the pictures. Some of them, particularly the US Navy's, are quite good.

R.L. SCHREADLEY  
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Fowler, William M., Jr. *Jack Tars and Commodores: The American Navy, 1783-1815*. Boston, Mass.: Houghton Mifflin, 1984. 299pp. \$17.95

Americans are a maritime people with vital interests upon the seas. During colonial times Great Britain's navy protected American seaborne commerce. During the War for Independence the French Navy provided the margin of victory at Yorktown. Yet, for a decade following the peace American leaders seemed to disregard these facts and the United States was without a navy. Some leaders went so far as to

question the need for such a force, but the establishment of a navy was inevitable. Whether American political leaders realized it or not, the use of the North Atlantic was, and remains of vital interest to the nation. Sooner or later the United States has been drawn into every major war involving the North Atlantic.

In this fast-paced narrative Fowler chronicles the nascent years of the US Navy from the first debates over how to meet the threat posed to American trade by the Barbary Corsairs, through the quasi-war with France to the Barbary wars and the War of 1812. An underlying theme is that the navy grew to become the nation's "chief glory" and that it brought to the new nation and to itself a high level of international respect. This record stands in sharp contrast to the navy of the Revolution as described by Fowler in his *Rebels Under Sail* (1976).

As in his earlier work, Fowler's research and use of secondary sources is thorough and his writing is excellent. He has a particular knack for selecting the telling phrase, as for example, when he calls Edward Preble "as hard and sharp as the Maine coast from which he came," and for selecting just the right document to cogently support the interpretations which he interweaves with the text.

His focus is on naval operations but he does not neglect naval policy, administration, or life in the navy. He is best in dealing with the 1790s, very good on the first decade of the